7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the 1st of January playing popular pieces of music, and this they do as a New Year's greeting. These men will rarely leave a house until some little gift of money is bestowed upon them as a remuneration for their trouble in paying their annual congratulations.

ST. ANTHONY'S DAY.

Among the popular Maltese customs in which animals play a leading part, that of the blessing of the quadrupeds of the equine species, in Valletta, on St. Anthony's day, is the most familiar.

On the morning of the 17th January (St. Anthony's day) a number of horses, mules, and donkeys, decked out in ribbons and tassels, are driven in procession in front of the Vittoria, a little

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 church in Str. Mezzodì, at the back of
•825 the Royal Opera House, where a priest standing at the door of the little church, sprinkles the animals with holy water as they pass by.

The same ceremony takes place annually at Notabile, where the animals are blessed by an Augustinian friar, at the door of St. Augustine Church. Here the quadrupeds partake of some barley which is placed in a tray for them.

796 In the time of the Order of St. John
825 of Jerusalem, the ceremony of blessing
175 the quadrupeds on St. Anthony's day was more imposing than it is in our days.

The first that took part in the procession, were the horses drawing the Grand Master's stately carriage, followed by every description of vehicle,

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

from the gala coach of the dignitaries of the Island to the peasant's cart.

Very many inquiries have been made into the origin of the blessing of quadrupeds on this festival, none of which, however, has proved satisfactory.

That St. Anthony has been long recognized as the patron and protector of the lower animals, and particularly of pigs, is a well established fact.

Fuller, in his "Worthies." says: "St. Anthony is universally known as the patron of hogs, having in all pictures a pig for his attendant, though for what reason is unknown, except because being a hermit, and having a cell or hole digged in the earth, and feeding principally on roots, he and the hogs were both alike in their diet and lodgings."

When St. Anthony was living in the

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

173 desert, away from the rumours of the
776 world, for the only object of serving God,
•825 the devil tried all his means to tempt the old hermit and win him to himself—the Saint, however, always held fast and kept faithful to God. The fiend, seeing that all his efforts were vain, took to frightning and tormenting the good hermit. On several occasions he appeared to him amidst a flock of wild beasts. Anthony, however, was never frightened, he soon invoked the name of our Lord and signed the cross for help, and the devil enraged was always obliged to leave him unhurt.

796 This is probably the reason why ani-
825 mals are blessed on St' Anthony's day,
173 so as to keep off the devil from them, and thus man is less liable to be injured or hurt by them.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

OMENS AND SUPERSTITIONS

ST. PAUL'S TONGUE

It was a popular belief among our ancestors that the teeth of fish, which we find embedded in some of the rocks, are St. Paul's *tongue*, which during his sermons penetrated even the solid rock. These fossils were pounded and the powder was held to possess a miraculous power in healing wounds.

Till recently it has been known that some of our countryfolks used to carry one of these teeth about with them, sometimes mounted on silver and hung about their necks, as an amulet against the bites of venomous vipers—at one time very abundant in Malta.

825 133
[278]
825 751

?: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

THE GHOST OF THE HOUSE

776 777 825 Some of our people believe in what they call *Il Háres*—and some of our country-folk still say that this *háres* exists in the shape af an old black serpent which guards the house and bestows riches and good luck on the children born in that house.

It is held extremely unlucky to kill the old black serpent, as after its death great misfortunes will befall the members of the family.

GOOD LUCK

787 823 [777] Many believe in their fortune or luck (especially maidens) according to the figures formed by melted lead.

On the Feast of St. John—24th of June—some lead is melted and immediately poured into a vessel containing

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

THE ITCHING OF THE EYE

787 826 [977] The itching of the eye is considered as an unlucky omen. Grose, celebrated antiquarian, who collected together so many of the superstitions prevalent in his day, says: "When the right eye itches the party affected will shortly cry."

THE ITCHING OF THE HAND

Among other omens we are told that the itching of the hands signifies that they will shortly receive money.

HOWLING OF DOGS

825 763 A superstitious opinion vulgarly prevails in Malta that the howling of a dog in a neighbourhood is the presage of death to any that are sick in it.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

The howling of the dog is ascribed by some to its keen sense of the odour of approaching dissolution. 825 763

This superstition which, while not confined to our Island, appears to have been almost as well known in ancient times as at the present day. 825 763 171

Dr. Nathaniel Home, in his "Daemonologie" page 60, says: "If dogs howl in the night near a house where somebody is sick, it is a sign of death."

Capitolinus tells us: that the dogs by their howlings presaged the death of Maximinus.

TINGLING of the EAR

It is a well known superstition among the Maltese that when the ear tingles they usually say that somebody is talking of them. A tingling of the right ear 787 826

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

787 585 533 in a rage, and he could not be persuaded to go back to his wedding before the organist could be found and the organ played for the occasion.

PAYING VISITS

273 594 576 825 If a person goes to pay a visit, for the first time, to a party and is not treated with a sort of drink called *zambur* — made of aniseed—a mouse enters the chest of drawers and gnaws all the petticoats of the mistress of the house.

SENDING TO THE OVEN

252 562 Some people think it a great shame for a woman who sends dishes to be cooked in an oven when her husband is away from the Island.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

THE ACACIA OR SPONGE-TREE

(Gazzïa)

824 Our ancestors had a strong aversion to introducing or bringing in the acacia or sponge-tree with the other flower-plants in the house.

[763] They believed that if the acacia were brought into the house the head thereof would die within twelve months.

THE NEWT

825 Our superstitiously inclined believe that when one kills a newt and leaves its tail contorting or wagging on the floor, that tail will be cursing the parents of its destroyer!

COAL-DUST AND SOOT

777 529 The throwing of coal-dust or soot instead of lime before a door on New year's day betokens gloom and bad luck.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

PARSLEY

824 763 When one plucks a stem of parsley by the roots and plants it again he may expect to lose one of his parents within the year.

THE HEN

825 763 When a hen crows it is at once destroyed as it foretells the death of some member of the family.

THE HAWKMOTH OR SPHINX

825 787 The appearance of a white hawkmoth betokens the coming home of some one who is abroad. The appearance of a black hawkmoth, however, is a harbinger of sad news.

COMETS

821 787 The appearance of a comet is a sign of an approaching evil.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

755 this case on account of the coldness of the metal.

755 *Jaundice*—Our folk believe that the •825 blood of a tortoise is an excellent remedy for jaundice caused by a fright. If the patient be a man he is to bleed a female tortoise in the leg and make the sign of the cross with its blood on the joints of his arms and legs—but if the patient be a woman she is to bleed a male tortoise.

Fright.—The cure of the ailments brought about in consequence of a fright is to kill a puppy, boil it, give the patient to drink the water in which it is boiled, then throw the whole boiled pup in the plate in such a way as to cause a fright to the patient.

Fever—Even for this dangerous disease our folks do not hesitate to practice their own remedies. One of these

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

consists in cutting open a live rabbit and applying it with the still warm entrails on the stomach of the patient. 755 [825]

Piles—Carrying about a dried fig in one's pocket is considered a good specific for this complaint. [824]

Rheumatism—Amateurs of the healing art advised the sufferer to carry about a dried fish in his pocket as a charm for its cure. [825]

Sty—To prevent or cure this disorder it is customary for the patient to throw over his shoulders seven grains of barley in a well. [824]

The superstitiously inclined say that a sty forebodes the inheritance of some riches. [787]

Beside the omens and superstitions briefly described in the preceding pages 128

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Maltese	*English*
"Red sky at evening, harness your mules. Red sky at morning, herd your beasts."	"Red sky at night, Shepherd's delight. Red sky in the morning Shepherd's warning."
"Ill weather comes, ahead or astern, when the cat sneezes."	"The cat washes herself before stormy weather."

821 171 539 [825]

Often it appears that sheer nonsense is mixed with sound common sense. Typical of the mixed "sense" and "nonsense" is the following: 245 824 242

> "The first autumnal produce of the wild fig is called by the Maltese *Barru*. A second crop which takes place in winter is supposed to be due to the outcome of the first produce. This is called *Carru*, and is supposed to bring forth the third outcrop which appears in spring time and is recognized as the *dukkar* or real fertilizer of the fig. This fruit is cut and hung up in pairs on the bough of the fig tree.
>
> "The male fruit (*dukkar*) is usually full of a colony of minute winged insects by the produce of which, the Maltese husbandman identifies the real fertilizing fruit. [825]
>
> "The pomegranate is supposed to be fertilized by the flowers of the wild parsnip, and for this purpose bunches of these flowers are thrown over the pomegranate tree when in flower. *Dakra*, probably from *dakar* = to fertilize, is the name given to the wild parsnip by the Maltese husbandman.
>
> "The male flowers of the wild carob-tree (*baghal*) are thrown over the branches of the female plant to favour impregnation.
>
> Small pieces of coarse stone are still hung up in the jujube-tree with a view to securing a good produce. 241 823

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

241 823 [171] Husbandmen would still consider that queer operation as a medium of impregnation (*Dukkar*). This strange usage may, however, be traced amongst the *fellahin* of Upper Egypt, where, as Professor Sayce points out in his contribution to the *Cairene and Upper Egypt Folklore* (Folklore, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, 1920, p. 200) phallic symbols are still hung up to protect the melons and sugar-cane. The old Maltese practice of hanging up stones to the jujube-tree may therefore be considered as a modification of this early phallic worship."[1]

The sense contained in these practices requires no elucidation. The horticulturist with his camel hair brush does no better than the peasant with the male carob flowers. The votive stones are a silent appeal to the oldest and greatest of the Old Things, to the All-Father, Giver of Life and Fertility, whose ancient and enduring image, from Drizzlecombe in Devon to the High Places of Melanesia, is the Rock or Stone without shape—the altar of "The Unknown God"—"Thou art Peter and upon this Rock. . . ."

[538] Traces of this rock-cult are plentiful enough in Maltese folklore. Children who throw stones into a well or into the sea will one day have to gather them up by their eyelashes. The "old stones" (i.e. *menhir*) resent being moved and are, for that reason, twice as heavy as ordinary stones.

751 825 776 "St. Paul's tongue"—a valuable amulet against the evil-eye and against all venoms—takes the form of fossilized teeth found in the ancient rocks. The blessed tongue which preached the gospel of the Redeemer is enshrined for ever in rock, the symbol of the Father.

776 823 St. Paul's rock-cell, in which he is reputed to have lived, has the miraculous property that no matter how much of the rock is cut away its bulk grows no less—a clear expression

[1] Lecture by Mr. Cremona at the University of Malta in 1922.

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

The officiating priest was then presented with a basin containing a cake, a handkerchief, and two bottles of wine—the usual fee on such occasions. When the marriage ceremony was completed, everyone returned from church in the same order as before.

As the newly married couple wended their way to their house, the women and girls who crowded the balconies showered flowers upon them also nuts and grains and wheat, and on their entering the house one of the kinsfolk threw from one of the windows or balcony a few handfuls of barley and some small coins on their heads.

The nuptial feast took place immediately afterwards; but the bride ate in a separate apartment. The repast being ended, she was seated next to her husband and drank out of the same cup.

At a village wedding the company danced during the feast, each dancer throwing a piece of money to the fiddlers and each guest contributing a fowl to the repast.

The bride always passed a week in her father's house, after which she was received with much pomp by her husband, whose relations gave a great feast which was called *il hargia*."[1]

The bridegroom's symbolic present of a fish is very likely connected with fecundity, for the fish was regarded as an emblem of fecundity by the Assyrians and the Phoenicians. It is not, however, in this connection alone that the fish is a potent symbol. Prudence (apparently a virtue highly prized in a Maltese wife—Salt, another symbol of prudence, is included in the ingredients with which the bride's lips are anointed), and Wisdom were anciently supposed to be the properties of numerous Sacred Fish. Finn M'Cull, in the Irish legend, "Happens upon the Salmon of Knowledge . . ."

[1] SUSUTTIL, op. cit.

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

174 584 825 which conferred on him "such Wisdom, Prowess, and good fortune . . . that Fame and Prosperity always attended him thereafter." Tennyson, describing his mystic Lady of the Lake, has:

> And o'er her breast floated the Sacred Fish.

The Saviour Himself was symbolized by the early Christians as a fish. Julius Africanus, an early Christian writer, said of Christ that He was the Great Fish, caught by the Hook of God, whose flesh nourishes the whole world.[1]

This bridal fish, then, may be in some sense a sacramental offering as well as a mere symbol.

584 789 828 The anointing of the bride's lips is yet another custom which, like the miniature "garden inclosed" of the marriageable girl, recalls the Canticle of Canticles:

> Thy lips my spouse are as a dropping honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue. . . .[2]

585 174 The whole of this marriage ceremony is reminiscent of the old Fertility cults—the cakes, sweetmeats, nuts, grain, all in honour of the fertile Mother whose bountiful Earth is carried in a bowl bearing effigies of the bride and bridegroom whom it is hoped she will bless with her own fecundity and riches.

EVERYDAY HABITS

771 788 Grez, the housewife, will go about her daily tasks carefully following a thousand small rules, most of which have their English parallels. She will never cut a loaf without first making the Sign of the Cross on it with forefinger or knife. If the loaf falls to the ground, she will kiss it by way of asking pardon. She will not sweep her house after sunset for fear of [754] sweeping away good fortune. She will take care not to throw her "combings" out of doors. Should anyone wish her ill it

[1] *The Lost Language of Symbolism.* [2] *Song of Solomon*, IV, ii.